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Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently amended) A method of preparing a chemically modified hemoglobin solution that is substantially free of contaminants comprising:

(a) dissolving an activated polyethylene glycol (aPEG) in a solvent suitable for addition to a hemoglobin solution and in which said aPEG is stable;

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(b) filtering said dissolved aPEG through ~~a filtration means~~ at least one filter which substantially reduces the levels of contaminants in the resulting filtered aPEG solution; and,

(c) combining said resulting filtered aPEG solution with a hemoglobin solution ~~in a combining means~~.

13. (Currently amended) The method of claim 12, wherein the aPEG is polyoxyethylene (POE).

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of ethanol, methanol, and acetonitrile.

15. (Currently amended) The method of claim 14, wherein ~~the filtration means~~ said at least one filter substantially reduces endotoxin contaminant levels in the filtered aPEG solution.

16. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein ~~the filtration means~~ said at least one filter reduces endotoxin contaminant levels in the filtered aPEG solution by at least 500 EU/cm² of filter area.

17. (Currently amended) The method of claim 16, wherein ~~the filtration means~~ said at least one filter comprises a 0.2 micron ~~mieren~~ Nylon 66 ~~Posidyne~~ nylon filter.

18. (Previously presented) The method of claim 17, wherein the hemoglobin solution comprises pyridoxylated stroma-free hemoglobin.

19. (Currently amended) The method of claim 18, wherein ~~the filtration means and combining means~~ said filtering and said combining are aseptically joined.